

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02

SS-15 ICA-11 HA-05 AID-05 /100 W

-----109783 160635Z /17

R 160508Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5389

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONSUL MANDALAY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 1752

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, BM, BG

SUBJ: BANGLADESH-BURMA BORDER PROBLEM

REF: RANGOON 1678 AND PREVIOUS

1. AMEMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE MADE A TRIP ALONE THROUGH THE NORTHERN ARAKAN STATE LAST WEEK, INCLUDING VISITS TO THE BORDER TOWNSHIPS OF BITHADAUNG AND MAUNGDAW. CIVILIAN AND ARMY OFFICIALS ON THE SPOT TOLD HIM THAT ABOUT 60,000 MUSLIMS HAD FLED TO BANGLADESH SINCE THE START OF THE IMMIGRATION CHECK (OPERATION NAGAMIN), WHILE AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF OTHERS HAD LEFT THEIR HOMES AND WERE HIDING IN THE JUNGLE ON THIS SIDE OF THE BORDER. BOTH MUSLIM AND ARAKANESE RESIDENTS OF THE BORDER AREA SAID THAT THE PEOPLE HAD FLED BECAUSE OF THE FEAR OF ARREST, NOT BECAUSE OF THE APPLICATION OF FORCE OR OTHER OFFICIAL MISTREATMENT. WHEN WORD SPREAD NORTH THAT THOSE WITHOUT DOCUMENTS WHO

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COULD NOT PROVE THEIR RIGHT TO LIVE IN BURMA HAD BEEN JAILED IN AKYAB AND OTHER TOWNSHIPS, THE MASS EXODUS BEGAN.

2. THE EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS HEAVY TROOP REINFORCEMENTS MOVING INTO THE BURMA SIDE OF THE BORDER, MOSTLY BY BOAT. HE ALSO OBSERVED ARTILLERY BEING BROUGHT IN. BURMA ARMY OFFICERS TOLD HIM THIS WAS BEING DONE AS A PRECAUTIONARY

MEASURE IN VIEW OF THE BUILD UP OF BANGLADESH FORCES ON THE OTHER SIDE. (HE SAID BANGLADESH MILITARY ENCAMPMENTS WERE PLAINLY VISIBLE FROM BURMA.) THE EMBASSY EMPLOYEE SAID HE DID NOT RUN ACROSS ANY EVIDENCE THAT THE BURMA ARMY WAS BEING USED AS AN INSTRUMENT TO DRIVE MUSLIMS OUT OF BURMA.

3. ANOTHER STATEMENT ON THE BORDER SITUATION APPEARED IN THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS ON MAY 14, REPORTING ON THE STATUS OF OPERATION NAGAMIN. IN THE SAME DRAB FACTUAL FORMAT AS ITS PREDECESSORS, THE STATEMENT ANNOUNCED THAT OVER 100,000 PERSONS HAD BEEN EXAMINED IN THE BITHADAUNG TOWNSHIP OF ARAKAN STATE. THE AUTHORITIES TOOK ACTION AGAINST 631, THE STATEMENT SAID, WHILE 23,400 FLED. THE STATEMENT CITES A NUMBER OF INCIDENTS WHERE "EVIL-DOING BENGALIS" FIRED AT GOVERNMENT FORCES OR OTHERWISE COMMITTED VIOLENT AND DESTRUCTIVE ACTS DIRECTED AGAINST THE IMMIGRATION CHECK. IT ALSO REPORTS THAT SOME 200 "ARAKANESSE NATIONALS", WHO ARE ALSO CITIZENS OF BANGLADESH, ENTERED BURMA. UNSPECIFIED "LEGAL ACTION" REPORTEDLY IS BEING TAKEN AGAINST THEM.

4. BANGLADESH AMBASSADOR KARIM INFORMED AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE GUB HAD AGREED TO RECEIVE AN OFFICIAL DELEGATION FROM BANGLADESH. THE AMBASSADOR SAID THE GROUP, HEADED BY THE FOREIGN SECRETARY, WOULD BE IN RANGOON SOMETIME THIS WEEK.
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Message Attributes

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